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By GWEN GIBSON

Washington, Dec. 29. — The moment Congress convenes, President Kennedy will dispatch an elite, 50-odd-man task force to Capitol Hill to plug for his legislative program. Unique among these torridor-pounding specialists will be a cute, trim, outspoken, cigar-smoking blonde named Jim who dares to call herself a lobbyist for the White House.

Jim Grant Akin of Dallas, Texas—proudly named for her late oil millionaire father—is the first woman appointed to carry on legislative legwork for the office of the President.

Most of her colleagues call themselves liaison men, rather than by the equivocal title of lobbyist. Husky-voiced Jim, a long-time student of political science, prefers to face facts.

"Government agencies aren't supposed to lobby," she said in an interview in her office. "But that's what we do. Maybe we aren't up there trying to influence votes, but we are trying to sell the President's program. We call on Congressmen, we take them to coffee, we try to see that they're happy."

"We're sort of people dealers, dealing in the art of getting along with politicians and bureaucrats."



Jim Grant Akin
Cigar-smoking blonde

Lobbying Is Not Always Wrong

Lobbying is a perfectly legal profession when conducted by the rules. It's authorized by article One of the Bill of Rights, which guarantees freedom of speech, of the press and of the right of the people "peaceably to assemble and to petition the government . . ."

The President has always kept liaison men in each of the Cabinet departments and independent agencies whose job is to button-hole members of Congress on behalf of his program. In the purest sense, they lobby for the people or at least for what the President considers best for the citizenship.

Jim was appointed Congressional liaison officer for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare after working as a volunteer campaign assistant to Larry O'Brien, Kennedy's chief political organizer, now head of the White House Congressional Liaison Office. She'll be a familiar figure in the halls of Congress before the next session ends, since two of JFK's chief legislative planks—medical care for the aged and aid to education fall within her bailiwick.

Congressmen Are Due for a Treat

The Congressmen who haven't yet met her are in for a treat. Jim's approach is frank and forthright. She's apt to say anything that pops into her razor-sharp mind. Appropriations hearings, to the shapely Texas heiress, are "that unromantic moment" when the executive must go to the legislative branch for money.

On days when "feeling political," she literally wears her partisan feelings on her wrist in the form of a charm bracelet with a gold dangle bearing the legend "I Hate Bruce." Reference is to Rep. Bruce Alger, only Republican Congressman from Texas, who beat Jim's candidate by a slim margin in 1958 and 1960.

The Fun's Just Getting Started

A plump-looking mother of two young children, a girl, 9 and a boy 7, Jim presents an anomaly in the White House.

and so forth," she said. "And I think the fun is just beginning."

Jim has had an acute interest in politics since the age of 15. As something of a child prodigy, she entered Hockaday School for Girls to major in political science. She later went through law school at Southern Methodist University and since has become a controversial ball of fire in Texas Democratic politics. She has managed political campaigns for Harry Truman, Adlai Stevenson and Vice President Johnson. She and her husband Bill Akin, an independent oil man, are said to be the biggest financial contributors to the Democratic Party in Texas.

Jim's outspoken nature recently plunged her into a feud with some Texas conservatives when, on her return from a tour of Russia, she criticized the U. S. and the Texas school systems.

Hit for Rapping Texas Schools

An advocate of more federal aid to education, Jim asserted that the Russians are creating "an educational elite" while Americans are "sold on the Cinderella story and are going to get kicked in their pumpkins if they don't pay more attention to education."

One Dallas newspaper rapped her for "the harshest criticism ever pronounced on our Texas school system."

During the coming Congress Jim will argue that no schools in the world are better than the best schools in the U.S.—"there just aren't enough of them."

She'll also fight for tougher college entrance examinations.

"Too many people in this country are interested in having their children in college," she says, "and don't care what they learn."

Evidence of the persuasion she can wield in Congress is shown in the gallery that blankets one wall of her office. It's thick with fondly autographed pictures of Senators and Representatives, but Jim insists with a grin, "I just keep it there to impress the civil servants."

Another notable feature of the office is the one of her prominently displayed pictures of Texas politician Jim Wright. Jim

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